

31 AUG 1999

Towers-Open

DR MAHATHIR OPENS WORLD TALLEST PETRONAS TWIN TOWERS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 31 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad officially opened what has become a symbol of Malaysia's many proud achievements, the Petronas Twin Towers, in a glittering ceremony here tonight.

The significance of the event was augmented by the fact that Malaysia today celebrated its 42nd National Day, the last such celebration of the millennium.

The soaring 88-storey building appeared simply spectacular as they bathed in dazzling lights and colourful laser rays that could be seen kilometres away.

The 452-metre high structure embellished by gleaming pinnacles are currently the tallest twin towers in the world.

The RM1.8 billion wonder, completed in mid-1996, is now the corporate headquarters of Malaysia's national oil corporation -- Petroliam Nasional Berhad (Petronas).

The night's festivities started after Dr Mahathir's address with the recital of a poem entitled "By the Towers" penned by national laureate Datuk A. Samad Said, by a Petronas personnel Abdullah Ahmad.

This was followed by a performance by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra and a candle light dance by the Petronas Performing Arts group.

Dr Mahathir then signed a plaque at a special light sculpture which was later projected on a 62m x 34m giant screen installed just below the skybridge linking the towers at level 41 and 42.

Seen from above, the sculpture formed an interlocking handshake that depicts unity and willingness of all Malaysians to work together for the good of the nation.

The towers and the giant screen then became the backdrop of a mesmerising light and sound show as the 1,200 invited guests were treated to a spectacular firework.

Forming part of the multi-billion ringgit Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) project, the towers are located right in the heart of the federal capital's Golden Triangle business and financial district.

Malaysians and foreign visitors alike would admire the towers with the stainless steel cladding of their exterior giving the appearance of silver ribbons and glass which will reflect the sunlight and sparkle like a multi-faceted diamond.

They incorporate all the features of modern intelligent buildings with specifications specially designed to yield maximum working comfort in a safe and secure environment.

Eight international firms submitted their designs for the Petronas head office and the one by well-known American architect Cesar Pelli was finally chosen for its intricate design derived from the manipulation of geometric patterns common to the Islamic tradition.

Each tower has a gross floor area of about 218,000 square metres.

Visitors also thronged the public park adjacent to the towers and the upscale Suria shopping centre at the foot of the buildings, some of the other components of the 40-hectare KLCC project located on the former Selangor Turf Club.

Petronas has a 49.5 per cent stake in the development of KLCC.

The Petronas towers have also starred in a major Hollywood production "Entrapment" where the main protagonists Sean Connery and Catherine Zeta

Jones could be seen dangling precariously from the skybridge in one of the more thrilling scenes of the movie.

Plans for the construction of taller buildings have been reported in the United States, China and Australia.

In Sept 1992, Dr Mahathir said of the KLCC: "This uniquely Malaysian project is consistent with the Government's objective to transform Malaysia into a developed nation by the year 2020, and it will definitely put Kuala Lumpur on the world map."

Cesar was once quoted as saying: "The key to my being able to design responsive and responsible buildings while remaining faithful to our modern condition is in the consistent relationship between the aesthetic system and the nature of the construction technology and system with which we build.

"It's not that we have to express every line in a truss, but there has to be a co-relation: a non-bearing wall should not look like a bearing wall. This has helped give intellectual continuity to my work," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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